

AN UNCOMMON TYPE OF STONE IMPLEMENT FROM  
AUSTRALIA AND NEW GUINEA.

*By D. A. Casey, Hon. Ethnologist.*

Plates IX–XI.

The stone implements, described in detail below, are of an uncommon type. Only ten examples are known to the writer; seven of these come from widely separated localities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and three, which are smaller but similar in form, from New Guinea. Several of these implements have already been described or illustrated by various authors, but being isolated examples they have not been recognised as belonging to a definite and widespread type.

THE AUSTRALIAN IMPLEMENTS.

Figs. 1–7, Plates IX, X, XI.

The implements vary in size and in details of shape but all have the same general characteristic form. They somewhat resemble bicycle saddles in plan, and several also in size. At the larger end the upper and lower surfaces converge to form a wide curved edge, and at the other there is a narrow projection, roughly circular in section and usually tapered. Where the original surface has been preserved all except one, No. 5, show signs of having been dressed to shape by hammering; some also appear to have been ground. The materials used (basalt, schist, indurated sandstone and limestone) vary greatly in composition and hardness, and some are quite unsuited to retain a cutting edge.

The purpose for which these implements were made is unknown. At first sight the curved edge suggests that they are axe-heads, but they are much too large and unwieldy to have been used for this purpose. Moreover, in most cases the edge is very thick and quite blunt and would have been useless for cutting. Possibly they were ceremonial objects.

Considering their wide distribution and the fact that they are clearly a specialised and not an elementary form, it is somewhat remarkable that only seven examples have been noted amongst the many thousands of Australian stone implements in

museums. It is unlikely that these seven are merely strays introduced from some unknown outside source. They are sufficiently varied in size and material to make this improbable, and moreover the material in each case is such as might well have come from the area in which the implement was found. The most probable explanation of their distribution is that they are an early type which has been superseded or discarded. That at least four of them are of considerable age is indicated by the fact that they are heavily patinated. It is, perhaps, significant also that in both cases where the details are known the implements were found not on the surface but below ground level.

If they are indeed an early type, these implements constitute one of the very few fragments so far discovered of material evidence of the early cultural history of the Australian aboriginal.

1. *From Myponga, South Australia, 38 m. S. of Adelaide.*  
Fig. 1, Plates IX and X.

Fine grained massive schist or micaceous sandstone, considerably patinated all over. The marks of hammer-dressing are visible over most of the surface. In section the edge is very obtuse and, except at one extremity, is only roughly formed. Found by Mr. Alex. Cameron, about 1892, when digging a post hole.

Weight, 14 lbs. Length, 14.4 inches.

South Australian Museum, No. A. 4552.

2. *From Emu Lake, Kinchega Station, N.S.W. 6 m. S.W. of Menindee.* Fig 2, Plates IX and X.

Moderately fine grained, greenish grey, indurated siliceous sandstone or quartzite. The surface is slightly worn but there is no perceptible alteration by weathering. The whole surface retains marks of hammer-dressing and has not been ground. The implement is well shaped and symmetrical except that one face is slightly concave and the other convex. There is a slight but distinct constriction round the implement where the narrow projection merges into the expanded portion.

Weight, 4 lb. 12 oz. Length, 9.6 inches.

South Australian Museum, No. A4551.

Numbers 1 and 2 are described here through the courtesy of the Director of the South Australian Museum, who has been

good enough to make them available to this Museum for examination. These two implements have been illustrated in outline by Edge Partington, *Pacific Islands Album III*, 1898, p.142. An inferior illustration of No. 2 appears in Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Sudaustralien*, 1908, Pl. XXII, fig. 10.

3. *From Deighton Station, Lake Victoria, Gippsland, Vic.* Fig. 3, Plates IX and X.

Fine grained compact basalt. The surface is oxidised to a depth of about .06 inch, and is much altered and smoothed by weathering. No traces of hammer-dressing remain. The edge is very rounded and blunt except at one extremity; the opposite extremity has been broken.

Weight, 12 lb. Length, 13.25 inches.

National Museum, No. 24668.

4. *From Yarraman Creek, near Cooyar, Darling Downs, Queensland, 40 m. N. of Toowoomba.* Fig. 4, Plate IX.

The following description is based on a note in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland, Vol. XXIX, 1917, p. xvi, and on a plaster cast of the implement now in the National Museum.

Medium grained basalt, considerably weathered. Under a thin brown ironstained coating there is a rather thicker layer of weathered felspathic material resting on the darker and fresher rock. The implement is well-shaped and symmetrical. The edge is reasonably good but not sharp.

Said to have been found below the surface of the ground.

Length, 9 inches.

Queensland Museum, No. Q.E. 1228.

5. *From Kallara Holding, Darling River, N.S.W., 40 m. S.W. of Louth.* Fig. 5, Plate IX.

This implement has been described and illustrated in Records of the Australian Museum XVI 1927-28, p. 248, Pl. XXVII, fig. 2. The director of the Australian Museum has been good enough to send the implement to Melbourne for examination.

Ferruginous quartzite, slightly patinated. The implement is roughly chipped all over except for a small area on one face

where the natural surface remains. There are no signs of hammer dressing or grinding. Possibly it is in an unfinished state.

Weight, 7 lb. 12 oz. Length, 12.7 inches.

Australian Museum, No. E11947.

6. *Locality unknown.* Almost certainly from Queensland and perhaps from Olsen's Caves, Rockhampton District. Fig. 6, Plate IX.

The drawing and description of this implement have been supplied by Mr. H. A. Longman, Director, and Professor H. C. Richards, Hon. Mineralogist of the Queensland Museum.

Basic volcanic rock, probably a normal fine-grained olivine basalt very similar in type to much of the late Tertiary basic volcanic material of Eastern Australia. The specimen is not patinated and appears relatively recent in comparison with No. 4. The surface is ground.

Weight, 3 lb. 4 oz. Length, 7.9 inches.

Queensland Museum, No. Q.E. 1234.

7. *From near Brisbane.* Fig. 7, Plates IX and XI.

The Museum is indebted to Mr. H. J. Braunholtz of the Department of Ceramics and Ethnology of the British Museum for the following description of this implement, and also for the photograph, Plate XI, from which the figure on Plate IX has been made.

Apparently limestone, fairly hard, grey on the surface and white where chipped. Roughly pitted all over, presumably by hammer-dressing, and weathered. One side is slightly convex and the other practically flat, probably having been ground. The edge is not sharp but appears to have been partly ground down also. Found on high land near Brisbane and given to the British Museum by B. H. Purcell, Esq., in 1897.

Length, 10.8 inches. Maximum thickness, 3 inches.

British Museum, No. 97-652.

#### THE NEW GUINEA IMPLEMENTS.

Figs. 8-10, Plate IX ; figs. 9, 10, Plate XI.

Being of a more suitable size, these were presumably axes. The chipped obsidian implement No. 8 is unique, and the other

two are the only examples of this type of implement which are known from New Guinea. According to Mr. E. W. P. Chinnery, Government Anthropologist, T.N.G., such implements are not made or used by the present natives. All three came from below ground level, and are almost certainly prehistoric.\*

Their similarity of outline strongly suggests relationship with the Australian implements, but with so few examples and with our present lack of knowledge of the archaeology of the two countries, the point cannot be stressed. It is significant, however, that similar implements appear to be an early type both in Australia and in New Guinea.

8. *From the Yodda Valley, Papua.* Fig. 8, Plate IX.

This implement was first described by C. A. W. Monckton, Resident Magistrate, British New Guinea Annual Report 1903-4, Appendix D., p. 31. It has also been illustrated and described by C. G. Seligman, and T. A. Joyce, Anthropological Essays presented to E. B. Tylor, 1907, p. 327.

Made from a single large flake of obsidian. The sides and butt are regularly and symmetrically shaped by secondary flaking, from both front and back. (Part of the butt is at present obscured by a modern hafting.) The degree of skill shown in the making of this implement is without parallel amongst chipped implements from New Guinea or the adjacent islands. The technique of working from both sides is not otherwise known from this area. As an axe the implement is unique also, in that the untrimmed edge of the flake has been utilized as the cutting edge.

Found below the surface of the ground.

Length, 7.2 inches. Maximum thickness, about 2 inches.

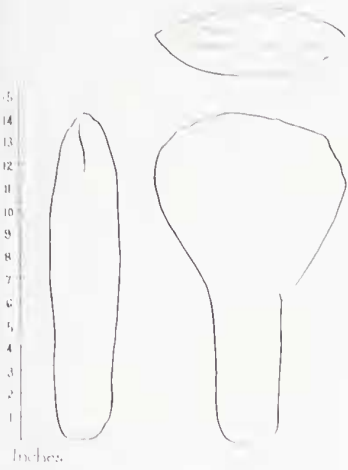
In the collection of the London Missionary Society, Samarai, Papua.

9. *From left bank of Nami Creek at its junction with the Bulolo River, Territory of New Guinea.* Fig. 9, Plates IX and XI.

Hard, fine-grained micaceous schist. Weathered or worn so that the harder portions of the rock protrude as ridges. Traces of what is apparently hammer-dressing are visible but most of the original surface has disappeared.

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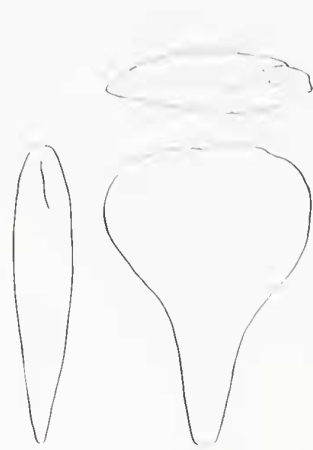
\*For evidence of a prehistoric culture in New Guinea, see : E.W.P. Chinnery, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, XLIX, 1919, p. 271 ; also C. G. Seligman and T. A. Joyce, Anthropological Essays Presented to E. B. Tylor, 1907, p. 325.



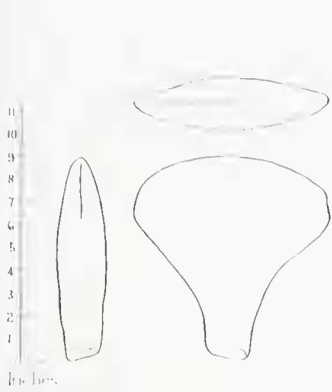
1. Myponga, S A



2. Menindee, N S W



3. Lake Victoria, Gippsland



4. Cooyar, Q



5. Kallara, Darling River



6. Locality unknown



7 Brisbane

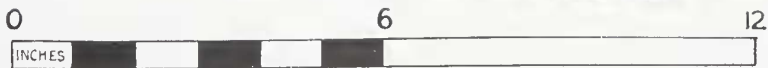
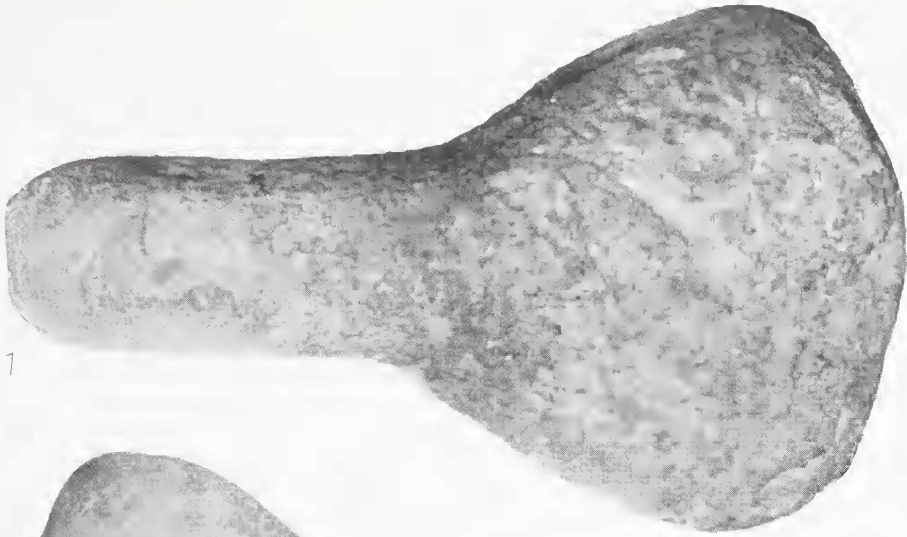


8 Yodda Valley, Papua



9. 10 Bulolo River, I N G





Stone Implements from Australia



7



9



10



Stone Implements from Australia and New Guinea